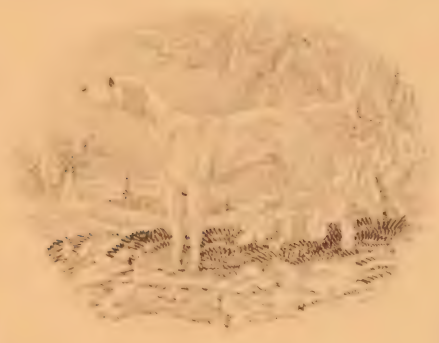
The Legend of the Hounds

George H. Boker

The Legend of THE HOUNDS

By GEORGE HENRY BOKER



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Introduction

THE *Legend of the Hounds* was written in 1867 by George Henry Boker, of Philadelphia. James T. Field, who read it in manuscript at that time, wished to publish it in the Atlantic Monthly, of which he was editor; but the author declined to release it separately, and kept it on hand for two years. It was included in Boker's book *Konigsmark and Other Poems* published by J. B. Lippincott of Philadelphia, in 1869.

Boker was born in Philadelphia in 1823. His father, Charles S. Boker, was a leading figure in financial circles in that city. He was president of the Girard Bank for twelve years. Young Boker was early attracted to literature. From his boyhood until his death in 1890, he took advantage of his financial security to devote his life to study and writing.

After his graduation from Princeton, Boker took up writing seriously, and had seen the publication of a number of critical essays, ballads and sonnets, before his tragedy, *Calaynos*, was produced on the London stage. After a successful season in London, *Calaynos* was produced in America by James E. Murdock, and the young poet was definitely launched upon a career as dramatist.

Calaynos was followed by many plays successful on the stage, including *The Betrothal*, *The World a Mask*, *The Widow's Marriage*, *Leonor de Guzman*, and *Francesca da Rimini*,

which is his best known play, and which was produced at the Broadway Theatre in New York in 1855 and later acted by Lawrence Barrett in repertoire for twenty years. Two volumes entitled *Plays and Poems* appeared in 1856.

In 1862 Boker took a leading part in the formation of the Union Club of Philadelphia, an organization which became The Union League the next year, and was soon copied in New York and other cities. Upon President Grant's inauguration Boker was appointed Minister to Turkey, a post which he held for four years when he was transferred to St. Petersburg.

An account of *The Legend of the Hounds* is to be found in *George Henry Boker* (1927), a biography by Edward Sculley Bradley, Assistant Professor of English in the University of Pennsylvania. Mr. Bradley says that, "since his early ballad, *The Shark*, Boker had not attempted to treat the supernatural, and this picture of the squire haunted by the phantom pack shows how well he could do it."

"There is not," Mr. Bradley says, "among all his narratives, a stronger piece of writing. Nor has any other modern poet, except Masefield, given us a more convincing and sympathetic picture of an animal than Boker's *Flora*. The same delicate understanding of the animal's nature which immortalizes *Right Royal* and *Reynard* is found in this much earlier picture.

"*The Legend of the Hounds* was based upon a story told the poet by a native of the Lebanon Valley of Pennsylvania. The origin of the story may or may not be based upon a real incident which occurred in that locality. It is certain, however,

that the Legend persists to this day. Local antiquaries still tell of the debauched and wealthy owner of a smelting furnace, who capped the climax of a long course of dissolute deeds by casting into the flaming furnace his one remaining friend, Flora, the noble Fox-hound who led his pack. It is said that the Squire's descendants were still living when the poem was published, and that they were so much disturbed by the use of the story that they purchased all of the available copies of *Konigsmark and Other Poems*, and burned them. Certainly the volume is scarce enough. To disguise the story somewhat, and to find a more convincing type in the wealthy squire, Boker placed his setting at Colebrook Furnace, among the tin mines of Cornwall in England, where, indeed, the legend may have originated, for it bears many of the marks of transplantation. Nor did he, of course, make use of the name of the squire in the poem. It was completed on February 9, 1867, soon after he had heard the story. Among his papers at his death was a letter, dated February 7, 1870, written by the man who had told him the story. He thanked the author for sending him the book and said: 'When I told you the story of old G . . . and his hounds, before that roaring furnace, yon summer evening, I little thought what a thing of beauty it would return to me.'"

A thing of beauty it certainly is. For its sustained narrative, vivid portrayal, delicate understanding of the subject and for its amazing simplicity of diction, it deserves not only to live, but to be more widely known. There is that vivid picture of Flora, the noble hound:

In field no hound could hold the scent
With Flora, as she bounding went
Ten lengths before the yelping chase,
And kept throughout her leading place.
No hound, however great of pride,
Had ever reached her milk-white side;
Unchallenged in the flying front,
She shone, a star, to all the hunt.

No less realistic is every moment of the poem: the description of the pack, the gathering of the hunt, the characters of the field, hunt servants, the master; and the sportsman's love of the chase. The picture of Flora, faithful even in the face of her master's wretched abuse, is one no sportsman could fail to cherish:

Serene, unfearing, taking all
That his capricious hand let fall,
Whether it smoothed or bruised a limb,
As grace, so it but came from him.

. . . .

And haply when his business took
The Squire from home, her haggard look,
Her anxious whine and listening ear,
Her busy snufflings far and near,
Her almost meaning human talk,
As his great boots ground up the walk;
The yelp, the burst of boundless love
With which she crawled to him, and clove
Close to his side, whate'er his mood,
Shamed the best passion of our blood.

A keen understanding of hunting and the management of hounds is shown in Boker's description in this poem of the listless condition of the Squire's pack the morning after they had been drugged:

> Into the brush the Huntsman led,
> Shaking his doubting grizzled head;
> And the keen Whips, on either side,
> Flanked the dull pack, and closely pried
> Hither and thither; till — oh shame
> To them and to the pack's wide fame! —
> Before their startled eyes they saw
> Sly reynard from the covert draw,
> With brush in air, and skurry by,
> Without a tongue to make reply
> To the rogue's challenge.

The same insight is shown in the author's description of the pack in other days:

> Better hounds,
> Fuller of music, of the sounds
> That fire the hunter, drawing near
> His furry prey with whoop and cheer —
> The dogs all bursting in full cry,
> Crashing through brush and timber high —
> Never could Cornwall boast;

One is reminded of Gay's description of the city dweller longing for rural scenes and of Keats' *Ode to a Nightingale* in these lines by Boker in which he describes the Squire's contempt for a crowded city:

Where plague at every window beats,
And Nature, like a beggar pale,
Stares vaguely through a grass-plot rail.

No poet since Somerville has written a better description of a fine scenting day :

A calm that scarcely made the trees
Nod recognition to the breeze
That from the south came up, and died
Along the tawny mountain-side ;
A dull, warm day, all cloud and haze ;
As hunters know, the day of days
For sport behind the vocal pack,
Once fastened on the fox's track.—
Such was the favored day that bent
Above the Squire, as forth he went.

Nor is there in English verse a more stirring panorama of hounds in full cry :

Noisy and boastful, as of old,
To show some city friends how bold
His horses were before a fence;
And how the depths of every sense
Were stirred when all the hounds gave tongue,
And down the hills the whole hunt swung,
With whoop and halloo, bark and bay,
And o'er the country scoured away.

Only the provincialism of the last century, which held that an American millionaire could not possibly be a poet, kept

Boker from full recognition. In recent years his fame has grown by leaps and bounds.

Boker rode to hounds and was considered a first rate horseman. This accounts for his keen understanding of the subject.

Modern fox hunting purists who read these moving verses will remember that they were written in 1867, in America. At this date an American, however deeply versed in hound and hunting lore would not adhere to certain words and phrases sacred in English fox hunting technique. The important matter is that the spirit of hunting and hounds is truly conveyed by Boker's lines; and the relation of the four-footed enthusiasts to the man who hunts them, desiring so mightily the thing that they desire most of all things in their cosmos—to be on the fox's line and driving for'rard.

It is to be hoped that this volume will help to enshrine *The Legend of the Hounds* permanently in American literature of the chase.

OWEN CULBERTSON

The Harvard Law Club
New York City
May, 1929

THE *Legend* *of the* *Hounds*

THE

Legend of the Hounds

Colebrook Furnace in Cornwall stands,
Crouched at the foot of the iron lands,—
The wondrous hill of iron ore
That pours its wealth through the furnace-door,
Is mixed with lime and smothered in wood,
Tortured with fire till a molten flood
Leaps from the taps to the sow below
And her littered pigs that round her glow:
So that a gazer, looking down
The moulding floor from the platform's crown,
Might think, if fancy helped the spell,
He saw a grate in the roof of hell.
Around the furnace, far and near,
Slag and cinder spread year by year.
Never a blade of grass or flower
Stood in the sun or bowed in the shower;
Never a robin whistled nigh,
Or a swallow clove the grimy sky;

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No cattle browsed, or musing stood
A summer's noon in the acrid flood:
Cursed and cursing, a thing of hate,
In its waste the moody furnace sate,
And the loathful breezes slowly led
The reek away from its flickering head,
To shower the poison down again
On arid hill and blighted plain.

Howbeit, this devil's labor rolled
Back on the Squire in floods of gold.
Gold and hunting and potent drink,
And loud-tongued girls, that grin and wink
Over the flagon's dripping brim,
These were the things that busied him.
Strong of sinew and dull of mind,
He blustered round like a winter wind.
You could hear his laugh come on before
While his hounds were off a mile or more;
And in the wassail he stormed and roared,
Clashing his fist on the groaning board,
Or clutched his trulls till their young bones bent,
And they shrieked at his savage merriment.
No being called the ruffian friend;
Gold was his all; the power to lend
Bought service of the groveling fear

Which fawns, because it dares not sneer,
And there it ended. Save the beasts
Who guzzled with him at his feasts,
Or, worse, the wantons whose caress
Was sold, he was companionless
Of man or woman. One rare hound,
The wonder of the country round —
Flora, the leader of his pack —
Followed, a shadow, in his track; —
Followed despite his kicks and blows,
Paused when he paused, rose when he rose;
Nestled between his clumsy feet
When all the table swam with heat,
And causeless oath and witless joke
Around the swinish circle broke;
And sometimes when her drunken lord
Slid stupefied beneath the board,
And stouter comrades jeered his plight,
With pointed thumbs and laughter light,
She howled above the Squire's disgrace,
Or, moaning, licked his flaming face.
In field no hound could hold the scent
With Flora, as she bounding went
Ten lengths before the yelping chase,
And kept throughout her leading place.
No hound, however great of pride,
Had ever reached her milk-white side;

Unchallenged in the flying front,
She shone, a star, to all the hunt.
To this fair brute the selfish Squire
Showed favor sometimes, sometimes ire.
Upon her head he smote his spite;
Or when his sluggish heart was light,
He soothed her forehead, pulled her ear,
Or tossed her morsels from his cheer.
But cuff or kindness could not move
The temper of her steadfast love.
Serene, unfearing, taking all
That his capricious hand let fall,
Whether it smoothed or bruised a limb,
As grace, so it but came from him.
No moment passed, by day or night,
That Flora held him not in sight;
And haply when his business took
The Squire from home, her haggard look,
Her anxious whine and listening ear,
Her busy snufflings far and near,
Her almost meaning human talk,
As his great boots ground up the walk;
The yelp, the burst of boundless love
With which she crawled to him, and clove
Close to his side, whate'er his mood,
Shamed the best passion of our blood.

Gordon Ross del. New York 29

Flora the leader of his pack

The Legend of the Hounds

One winter night when half the world
Was drowned in snow, whose billows curled
Above all landmarks — when the breeze
Stung, like a swarm of angry bees,
And made the traveler wild and blind —
The Squire, half-drunken, left behind
Some neighboring revelers, to essay
Across the fields his homeward way.
How long he wandered, why or how
He reached the mountain's highest brow,
Straggling unheedful a stone's cast
From his own pale, and onward passed
Across the road and frozen brook,
While his chilled muscles crept and shook,
And each strong spasm of the gust
Half-smothered him with snowy dust —
Was that which from his torpid state
His memory could not separate.
At last, bewildered at his plight,
He laughed; and with a spirit light,
Because the snow was soft and deep,
Thought he would rest himself in sleep.
He was not cold now nor afraid;
"For daylight will soon break," he said.
And the last things that crossed his mind,
Ere his numb senses he resigned
To sleep, was snow, snow, snow all round,

And the far baying of a hound.

Flora throughout the night had been
In grievous trouble, and her mien
Struck all the servants. O'er and o'er
She scratched and whimpered at the door,
Begging to pass, though still denied
Because the storm so raged outside.
At length, despairing of the Squire,
The house made ready to retire;—
"For surely no one, in his mind
Would brave this awful snow and wind;"—
When suddenly from off her lair,
With ears erect, with every hair
Bristling upon her snowy hide,
Jaw hanging, eyes distended wide,
Tail rigid, twitching lip and nose,
Flora amidst the servants rose.
Paused in the middle of a bound,
Like silence listening for a sound,—
Paused but one moment. With a cry,
Or scream, said they then standing by,
Sheer through the glass she drove her way
Into the night. Oh such a bay—
So clear, so clarion-like, so shrill—
Never arose on Cornwall hill,

When the spent fox toiled full in view,
And Flora heard the Squire's halloo,
As through the powdered snow she tore,
With nothing visible before,
With nothing but God's hand to trace
The rout and purpose of her chase!
She reached the Squire, a rigid heap;
Already the thick, fatal sleep
Was heavy on him; and the snow
Was rising, like a tidal flow,
Around his person. Brow and beard
Were buried quite, as Flora reared
Her form above him. So she stood
An instant in a thoughtful mood;
Then barked, bayed, bellowed in his ear,
Mad with the passion of her fear;
Licked his stiff nostrils and his cheek,
Mouthed the dull lips that could not speak;
Tugged at his garments, fiercely tore
His listless hands until the gore
Ran trickling slowly; and at length,
With all the vigor of her strength,
Dragged him along, good half a rood;
And fairly on his feet she stood
The man, bewildered and half dead,
Who staggered forward where she led,
With her long muzzle holding tight

Golden Hess del. New York 29

So she stood an instant in a thoughtful mood

His outer coat; and then a light —
He knew not when — he could not say —
Flashed round him, like a sudden day;
And somehow, stumbling, so he fell
Across his threshold — who could tell! —
Bursting apart the shattered door.
Long after that, he knew no more
Until he wakened in his bed,
With Flora resting her white head
Between his knees, and her soft eyes
Fixed on his own, serenely wise.

But all this happened long ago;
And many a storm of windy snow
Had capped the hill and filled the dell,
Since Flora's chase was news to tell.
A calm that scarcely made the trees
Nod recognition to the breeze
That from the south came up, and died
Along the tawny mountain-side;
A dull, warm day, all cloud and haze;
As hunters know, the day of days
For sport behind the vocal pack,
Once fastened on the fox's track. —
Such was the favored day that bent
Above the Squire, as forth he went,

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Noisy and boastful, as of old,
To show some city friends how bold
His horses were before a fence;
And how the depths of every sense
Were stirred when all the hounds gave tongue,
And down the hills the whole hunt swung,
With whoop and halloo, bark and bay,
And o'er the country scoured away.
"I'll show them — by the Lord! — I'll show
Such scenes as cockneys never know,
Prowling about their filthy streets,
Where plague at every window beats,
And Nature, like a beggar pale,
Stares vaguely through a grass-plot rail!"
His vulgar burst of pride indeed
But gave the Cornwall lands their meed.
It seemed as though the fields and skies
Had interchanged their wonted dies;
So dark the clouds, so bright the wood,
Glazed over with a dewy flood.
Purple and gold and flaming sheen
Stood out against the evergreen
That, here and there, in clumps and spires,
Defied October's painted fires;
And far away with mighty swell,
Like a great pillar thrust from hell,
The fumes of Colebrook Furnace stood

In dismal weight above the wood.

For all his boasts, the Squire's fine pack
Sulked at the outset, and held back,
With drooping tail and humble head,
And deprecating eyes that said,
Almost as tongues, this morning's sport
Finds us with spirits slack and short.
The Huntsman and the angry Whips,
With curses hissing through their lips,
Drove the reluctant dogs along,
A sullen and rebellious throng.
Flora herself had lost her pride,
And strayed, with vacant eyes, mouth wide
And lolling tongue, behind them all,
Deaf to her duty's urgent call.
In wrath the Squire exclaimed, "Why, zounds!
Matthew, what ails these cursed hounds?"
"I know not, sir," replied the Whip,
"Unless some scoundrel chose to slip
A drug into their feed last night,
To do your promises a spite.
These city chaps —" "Pshaw! drive along!
And — damn your mercy — use the thong!"
"No good in that. We'd best turn back.
You'll get no run, Squire, from the pack.

A sullen and rebellious throng

And see yon cockney's tallow face;
He's grinning at our hounds' disgrace!"
Across the Squire's low brow a band
Of crimson came. His strong right hand
Closed on his whip-stock till the thorn
Cracked in his clutch. A growl of scorn
Rolled from his lips, to see the smile
Flitting around him. For a while
He paused in doubt, then cried, "Away,
To covert! Give the dogs fair play!
And if they fail us there, why then —
But give the pack a chance, my men!"
Into the brush the Huntsman led,
Shaking his doubting grizzled head;
And the keen Whips, on either side,
Flanked the dull pack, and closely pried
Hither and thither; till — oh shame
To them and to the pack's wide fame! —
Before their startled eyes they saw
Sly reynard from the covert draw,
With brush in air, and skurry by,
Without a tongue to make reply
To the rogue's challenge. "There, look there!
A fox, by Satan! And I swear,
If I have eyes, the rascal rose
Almost beneath white Flora's nose!
Drive out the curs! Is this the way

Sly Reynard from the covert drew

You beat a covert? Out, I say!"
The devilish temper of the Squire
Burst outward; as a furious fire,
That long has gnawed a roof, at last
Breaks through it with a sudden blast,
And leaps revealed, and towers on high
In flames and sparks against the sky.
Amid the cowering dogs he dashed,
Rode over some, cursed all, and lashed
Even Flora till her milky side
With trickling crimson welts was dyed.
He raved and punished while his arm
Had strength to do the smallest harm;
Then paused, with flaming eyes, white lips,
And bellowed at the trembling Whips:
"Drive out, you scoundrels!" "Drive, sir? — where?" —
Just then the misty autumn air
Looked darker for a heavy smoke
That, rolling from the Furnace, broke
Above the woods, and waved its plume
Portentous of a coming doom.
"Where? Why to Colebrook, down the glen.
I'll show these town-bred gentlemen,
If my dogs cannot hunt so well
On earth, another hunt in hell!"
Bawled the mad Squire; and all the beast

In his base nature so increased,
That he could crown the deed he sought
With laughter brutal as the thought.
So the whole hunt towards Colebrook rode,
Marveling at what the Squire forbode
By those strange words. Across the waste
Of slag and cinder slowly paced
The snorting steeds; and hanging back,
Whipped to each step, the drooping pack
Followed perforce. Ah! well I know
That some foul malice of a foe
Had practiced on the noble hound;
Or what that day could so confound
Great nature's instinct, and so shame
The faithful creature's well-won fame?
Beside the Furnace, wondering still
What freak the angry Squire might will,
The hunt dismounted. "Up!" he said,
"Up with you, to the furnace-head!
Yes, bring the dogs." The Whips looked blank.
Some muttered, "Nonsense!" and some shrank
From the fierce heat that overran
The reeking walls. "Up, dog and man!"
Yelled forth the Squire. "By Heaven, you'll rue,
If any balk the thing I'd do!"
That they knew well: so up they sped,

Still grumbling, to the furnace-head.
"Call here the firemen!" And they came,
Grimy with dust, those sons of flame,
Half-brute, scarce human, drudges base,
Bound to their mean and groveling place
By natures not a whit above
The abject work at which they strove.
Beneath them, panting, rose and fell
The surface of that pot of hell.
Great logs of wood, and limestone gray,
And tons of ore, all boiled away
In one huge mass, that seethed and fumed,
Crackled and sparkled, flashed and gloomed,
And belched its sulphurous breath around,
Reeking aloft towards heaven's profound:
As though the devil's self had planned
A cunning engine, reared and manned,
Once more to wage against the Lord
The battle lost him by the sword.
A hundred curious eyes exchanged
Looks with their neighbors, as they ranged —
Hunters and firemen, and the crew
Of idlers who the chase pursue —
Around the dreadful caldron's jaws,
Waiting the Squire's behest. A pause —
In which the crackling of the coals,
The sobbing vapor, and the rolls

Of pitchy smoke seemed strangely clear —
Fell on the gazer's eye and ear.
Then spoke the Squire; and if his breath
Had flamed like that vast pit of death,
Wilder dismay would not have hung
Upon the mandate of his tongue.
"Come here, you drones, and work a spell!
Look to your furnace! Can you tell
What needs a fire so dull and slack?
Feed it, you sluggards, with this pack!"
A cry, or protest rather, rose
From every lip before the close
Of those infernal words. Thank Heaven,
'Twas echoed by the lowest even!
Thank God, in man's behalf, I can
Record it for the sake of man!
Back from the furnace reeled the throng,
Stung to the heart; but stern and strong
As the dark, pitiless, vague form
That reigns in Hades, when the storm
Of wrath is wildest, and the lost
On blazing waves are upward tossed,
Pale with their tortures; so the Squire,
Grim and unshaken in his ire,
With deadly calmness slowly said,
"Do as I order!" White with dread,
That beautified their dusky clay,

The dolts, who dared not disobey,
Approached the hounds. Oh, wonder not
At the poor serfs; for on that spot,
Such was their master's power and awe
That his mere nod was more than law;
'Twas fate, 'twas sustenance to come
To them and to the mouths at home.

Into the flames with howl and yell,
Hurled by the rugged firemen, fell
That pack of forty. Better hounds,
Fuller of music, of the sounds
That fire the hunter, drawing near
His furry prey with whoop and cheer —
The dogs all bursting in full cry,
Crashing through brush and timber high —
Never could Cornwall boast; and still
The silent lands lament their ill,
And the mysterious spell that lay
Upon them on that fatal day.
For now the bubbling liquid fire
Swallowed them all. Beside the Squire,
Flora alone stood desolate,
Sole relique of the general fate.
A hundred times had Flora dashed,
As some poor comrade yelling plashed

Into the sparkling molten lake,
With cries that any heart might shake—
A hundred times had Flora sprung,
Half frantic, moaning, giving tongue,
Up to the very furnace-brim,
Then slowly backward crawled to him,
Her lord, her idol, with her eyes
Speaking her piteous surprise.
"What, you vile wanton, are you there?
In with the bitch!" "But, Squire—" "I swear
I'll brain the fool that wags a lip!"
Up rose his heavy hunting-whip:
Another word had sent it full
Upon the talker's naked skull.
"In with her! She's the last and worst:
Mere justice should have sent her first!"
Towards her approached the loathful gang;
But Flora bared her ivory fang,
And snarled a warning. Every hair
That bristled on her said—"Beware!"
As crouching low, her dangerous eye
Fixed on the ruffians drawing nigh,
She fairly awed them, till they stood
Quailing before her lion mood.
"You shrinking cowards!" foamed the Squire,
Now with redoubled rage afire,
"Is't for your pretty skins you fear

To venture? Flora!—here, dog, here!"
At once the look of wrath was gone;
A trusting, tender, loving dawn
Rose in her eyes; her talking tail
Quivered with joy; a low, soft wail
Broke from her, as the iron hand
Of the stout Squire from off her stand
Swung her; and striding towards the ledge
With his pleased burden, on the edge
Oh awful death—oh, foul disgrace!—
She turned and licked his purple face.
Sheer out he flung her. As she fell,
Up from that palpitating hell
Came three shrill cries, and then a roll
Of thunder. Every pallid soul
Shrank from the pit; and ghastly white,
As was the snow one winter night,
The Squire reeled backward. Long he gazed
From face to face; then asked, amazed,
"Was it a fancy? If you heard,
Answer! What was it?—that last word
Which Flora flung me?" Answer came,
As though one mouth pronounced the name,
And smote the asker as a rod;
"The word she said was—'God, God, God!'"

The Legend of the Hounds

Home rode the Squire with heavy mind.
Why did he turn and look behind
So often, seeming there to trace
Something that followed pace by pace?
What was the meaning of his sighs,
His wistful looks in other's eyes,
As though he wished to solve a doubt
Of that he dared not ask about?
Why was he so bewildered? — so
Astray in talking? Where the flow
Of those coarse spirits that so long
Had buoyed him up through sin and wrong?
What was it? Something was not right
About him; that was plain to sight.

After that hunt, a change began
To work upon the stricken man.
Sulky and dismal, still and shy,
He skulked to shun the public eye.
Comrade by comrade gave him up.
No more for him the festal cup
Went round; no more the drunken jeer
Through peals of laughter smote the ear.
His table spread its leaves no more
To tempt his cronies to his door.
The girls, he one time loved so well,

Shrank from the strange abiding spell
That lay upon him. All alone
With some dread secret of his own,
That shook him with a nervous fear
When man or maid or child drew near —
Some mystery that shunned the light,
And stole away from common sight,
Burdened his mind, and made his ways
Sad to behold — he passed his days.
Hour after hour, with listless air,
He'd idly rock upon his chair;
But this strange fact was marked by all,
Who served his sullen beck and call,
That ever, as he took his seat,
It seemed as though his shrinking feet
Were pushed apart by something, seen
But by himself. As strange his mien
In walking; for his hanging hand
He'd often snatch, as though a brand
Were laid against it. Often, too,
When his house-door he entered through,
He'd slam it tight, as though he tried
To shut upon the outer side
Some odious follower. Of the Squire
But this remained, a thirst like fire
For drink, drink ever. Tawny wine,
Or the pale vintage of the Rhine,

Or crimson claret, or the cup
That foams and sparkles, he gave up
For that accursed fiend whose eye
Glares through the spirit of the rye,
And scatters o'er this hapless land
Wreck, woe and death on every hand.
From morn till eve, the whisky ran
In burning torrents through the man;
And often in the middle night,
Or when the sky was gray with light,
The waking servants heard the clink
Of glass, forerunning drink, more drink.

The Squire's bad way of life at length
Told even on his rugged strength:
The drink gnawed slowly to the seat
Of life itself. His tottering feet,
His moist, dull eyes, his mottled skin,
The stupor deadening all within,
The silly giggle, and the wink
With which he clutched the fatal drink —
All these things said to any ear,
The Squire's last hour is drawing near:
Cut out the cloth, and wax the thread,
To make a garment for the dead!
Twice spasms had seized him; fancies dread

Of snakes and vermin thronged his bed.
Male nurses, from the distant town,
Between his gnashing teeth forced down
Strong opiates; while his wakeful eyes
Flared here and there, with vague surprise,
At visions which he tried to touch
With care, their seeming truth was such
Slowly he rallied from these spells,
Emerging from long sleep; and hell's
Apparent purpose twice was foiled.
So the poor mortal slowly toiled
Back into life; and for a tide
He and the draught of suicide
Were strangers; but some influence,
That had the mastery of his sense,
Would draw him down, till once again
The demon held his deadly reign.

For the third time at length he lay
Upon his bed. The heat and fray,
The feverous phantoms all were gone;
And sane in mind, but most forlorn,
He panted onward through the dark;
Drifting along like some wrecked bark,
Blown inward towards a misty coast,
That shouts with all its white-capped host,

From every bar and headland near,
A warning which Fate laughs to hear.
He spoke: "Where's Flora?" None replied.
"That's strange!" and then he weakly tried
To peer around. "Gone, gone! then I
Must follow!" With a dreary sigh,
As one accepts a coming fate,
Foredoomed him from the earliest date,
The Squire turned slowly on his bed.
"Open the curtains; raise my head!
For I must look my last to-night
On Colebrook Furnace. What a light
Circles its head! What angry reeks,
In blue and white and yellow streaks,
Roll o'er it, flashing high and higher,
Whene'er they feed the raging fire!
Give me some drink. — Not that damned stuff,
But whisky! I have had enough
Of doctor's potions. Let me slip,
With honest liquor on my lip,
Out of this life. I long to flee:
Better may come; worse cannot be."
As he was ordered thus, the nurse
Held long and oft the liquid curse
To the Squire's mouth. The leech had said,
Shaking his placid smiling head,
"When the spent wretch rejects his draught" —

And here the fawning nurse had laughed —
"His hour will be at hand." The Squire
Gazed long on Colebrook's lurid fire.
A while he muttered to himself
Of dogs and horses, girls and pelf;
Or softer fancies of the child
Made pictures, till he almost smiled.
But suddenly, with fearful cries,
Through the wide sash he fixed his eyes;
Then strained, and rose, full half his length,
Upon his mattress, by main strength,
Shouting, so all the house might hear,
Aghast with more than mortal fear, —
"Here they all come, the hellish pack,
Pouring from Colebrook Furnace, back
Into the world! Oh, see, see, see!
They snuff, to get the wind of me!
They've found it! Flora heads the whole, —
Whiter than any snows that roll
O'er Cornwall's hills, and bury deep
The wanderer in blissful sleep.
Ho! mark them! We shall have a run
Before this ghastly meet is done!
Now they give tongue! They've found their prey!
Here they come crashing — all this way —
And all afire! And it is I —
Weak as I am, and like to die —

Who must be hunted!" With a bound
He reached the floor, and fled around;
Once, twice, thrice, round the room he fled,
Then in the nurse's arms fell dead.

Still Colebrook Furnace grimly stands,
Waving its plume o'er Cornwall's lands,
Blighting the air with poisoned breath,
Spreading its bounds of waste and death,
Its slag and cinder, dry and dun,
That nothing green will grow upon;
Still, like a hoary king, it rears
Its head among its dismal peers;
Still at its glowing feet are rolled
The floods that turn to wicked gold;
Still beasts, birds, reptiles shun the place,
And man alone will do it grace;
The Squire and all his race are gone;
But this wild legend still lives on.
Christ save us from the wretched fate
Of him who dared his wrath to sate
On God's dumb creatures, as of old
Befell the Squire of whom I told!

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